



**August 09, 2021**

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## Employee Spotlight

### *Service Awards Luncheon*

- ◆ VDOF held its annual Service Awards Luncheon at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center in the historic Jackson Wards neighborhood of Richmond. Attendees were given a tour of the museum and lunch from the famous Mamma J's. In light of the missed opportunities to honor our staff during the COVID-19 restrictions, this luncheon honored the folks with 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of state service, recognized the contributions of our staff that retired since January 1, 2020, and invited those with three years of service also. Those honored included:

- **35 Years of State Service**

Dean Cumbia	Dir. of Forest Resource Management	Headquarters
Nelson Jarvis	Forest Technician	Eastern Region
Richard Reuse	Forester	Eastern Region
Stuart Sours	Water Quality Specialist	Western Region
Mary Gay Altizer	Program Support Technician	Western Region

- **Retired**

Sandra Stephens	45 years of service	Central Region
Gwynn Tyler	45 years of service	Central Region
Paul Reier	42 years of service	Eastern Region
Henry Womack	41 years of service	Central Region
Junius Miles	40 years of service	State Forest
Blair Dalton	38 years of service	Central Region
Amy Ricotta	37 years of service	Headquarters
David Tolliver	36 years of service	Western Region
David Terwilliger	36 years of service	Eastern Region
Gary Heiser	35 years of service	State Forest
Charlie Becker	34 years of service	Headquarters
Charlie Knoeller	33 years of service	Eastern Region
George Wright	29 years of service	Eastern Region
Steve Counts	28 years of service	Headquarters
David Stone	27 years of service	Central Region
Harvey Darden	12 years of service	Headquarters
Debbie Zimniewicz	12 years of service	Western Region
Greg Evans	7 years of service	Headquarters

- **Three-Year Mile Stone**

Hector Rivera	HR Director	Headquarters
Amy Bigger	Forester, Meherrin Work Area	Central Region
Manij Upadhyay	Forester, Mattaponi Work Area	Eastern Region
Jacqueline Newton	Staff Accountant	Headquarters
Josh Bennicoff	Nursery Manager	State Nursery
Benjamin Duke	State Forest Technician	State Forest
Amanda Scheps	Forest Conservation Specialist	Eastern Region
James Banty	Nursery Technician, GG	State Nursery
Jesse Bander	Forester, Capital Work Area	Eastern Region
Monica Davis	Program Support Tech, AFC	State Nursery
Travis Tindell	Forester, Waverly Work Area	Eastern Region

- ◆ The [2021 Service Awards photos](#) are now available on the VDOF Flickr site.

## Employee News

### Welcome to VDOF!

- ◆ We are pleased to welcome Zoë Bergman as a new natural resource specialist in the Rappahannock Work Area. Zoë has a B.S. in biology with a concentration in ecology and environmental sciences from James Madison University, and recently completed her master's in environmental sciences with a track in ecology from the University of Virginia. Zoë also has two years of natural resource experience in the research field. Her start date is August 10.

## Project Updates

### Urban Wood Project Update

- ◆ The Virginia Urban Wood Project (Joe Lehnen, forest utilization and marketing Specialist) and the VDOF's Urban and Community Forestry staff (Lara Johnson, urban and community forestry [U&CF] program manager, Molly O'Liddy, U&CF partnership coordinator) and Becky Woodson (forest

management programs coordinator) recently coordinated the Southern Urban Wood Forum. The forum was a collaborative project among the following partners: Georgia Forestry Commission, North Carolina Forest Service, North Carolina Urban Wood Group, Mississippi Forestry Commission, the Oklahoma Forest Service and Trees Virginia. The two-day virtual event occurred on the mornings of August 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> with an average attendance of 150 participants from across the United States and internationally from Italy.

- ◆ The Southern Urban Wood Forum was recorded and will soon be posted on the Trees Virginia website: <https://www.treesvirginia.org/>.

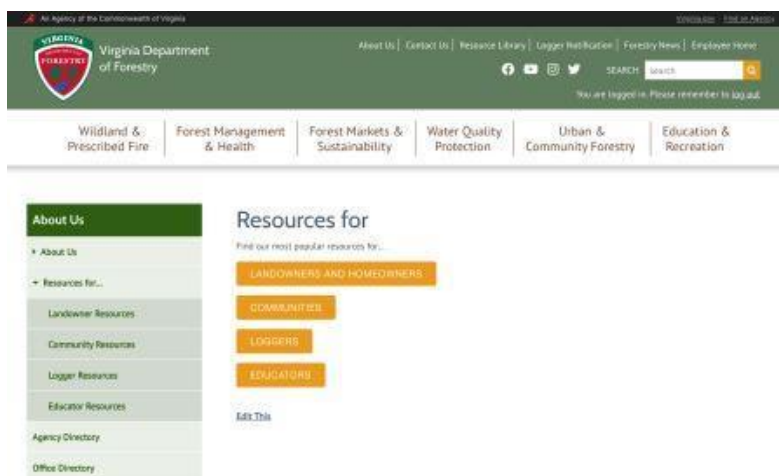
## News You Can Use

### Website Tips

- ◆ Did you know that our new website has Google Translate? Well, it does! The most common languages, including Spanish, are listed on the translate list in the bottom right corner of the home page. This translator allows the visitor to see all webpages in their preferred language.



- ◆ The lower "About Us" section of the left navigation menu appears from most web pages to provide quick access to the most common items, such as "Find a Forester" and "Agency Directory". There is also a "Resources for" individual audiences option that provides another path for the audience to find the most popular information for that audience (Landowner, Logger, Community, Educator).



## Intranet Tips

- ◆ When logged into the Intranet, there are many of the most common links employees need under the System Links menu at the far right.



- ◆ Employees can find the minutes of employee committees, such as the Leadership Roundtable, on the Intranet under Business Office, Agency Committees.



## Last Week

### Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (urban and community forestry [U&CF] program manager) was contacted by Rebecca Stimson of SOVA Innovation Hub to discuss the use and promotion of higher-value urban and local wood products. They are a non-profit organization established in 2020 to focus on economic transformation in Southern Virginia with investments by Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC) and Microsoft TechSpark. Lara and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) had a virtual meeting and the VDOF agreed to work with Rebecca to develop more local contacts and business development opportunities. This is the first step in cooperatively working together on a project.
- ◆ Molly O'Liddy (U&CF partnership coordinator) and Meghan Mulroy-Goldman (community forestry specialist) attended the coastal resiliency stakeholder meeting for the York River watershed. The meeting was hosted by the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) and focused on urban-related factors

that affect the area. The GIC is working on a comprehensive study to determine the threats relevant to the area's coastal forests. The study will offer each municipality within the study area ways to mitigate and manage these threats to protect coastal forestlands. Members of the area's planning departments, GIS analysts and watershed engineers also attended the meeting.

- ◆ Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) attended the Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team monthly meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to hear agency updates around reporting and progress towards the 2025 Watershed Implementation Plan goals. Lara Johnson also provided an update regarding ongoing efforts to capture data regarding urban heat islands across the Commonwealth and program adaptation to new data.

## *Forest Resource Management*

- ◆ VDOF Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) crews have completed and transmitted 81% of the inventory plots in the current panel of work as of August 1 (FIA staff had completed 70% as of July 1).
- ◆ Lori Chamberlin (forest health program manager) and Katlin Dewitt (forest health specialist) are working with Virginia Tech to select demonstration sites for a bio-herbicide that controls tree-of-heaven. This is part of a Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) project to restore ailanthus stands following their removal with a bio-herbicide. VDOF was awarded the grant and is partnering with Virginia Tech to implement the treatment.
- ◆ Forest Health program staff conducted ground surveys at Mountain Lake in Giles County. This is the site of a fall cankerworm outbreak that occurred 2018-2020 and caused significant defoliation. Oak mortality was observed during an aerial survey last month, and now data is being collected on the ground to document the oak mortality.

## *State Forests*

- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) led an educational hike to the Channels on the Channels State Forest for 16 people in association with the Abingdon Highlands Festival. Discussion along the way focused on the ecology and management of the Channels State Forest and Natural Area Preserve. Visitation to the Channels State Forest and the rock formations of the Channels has been very high with large numbers of folks desiring to see the natural wonder leading to many posts on social media sites!

## *Eastern Region*

- ◆ Eli Podmya (community forestry specialist) received a request from Maymont Park's horticulture department to have Kate Jackson, a horticulture intern and a senior at VCU, to shadow for a day. Eli and the intern attended a meeting with VCU Sustainability Coordinator Wyatt Carpenter at the Amelia Street School to discuss maintenance strategies for their urban planting. Afterwards, they visited a James River Buffer Program (JRBP) planting at West End Manor Civic Association where Kate got to see some of our planting project monitoring, as well as meet their civic association president and hear how they worked with us on the JRBP planting. Kate asked some great questions and picked up on forestry concepts very quickly. Maymont Park has expressed interest in having Kate, or another intern shadow again in the future.



- ◆ Kendall Topping (community forestry specialist) worked with local nonprofit, Lynnhaven River Now, and local business, Bay Environmental, to install a living shoreline in North Virginia Beach. The shoreline was installed to reduce erosion and sedimentation in Great Neck Creek while increasing biodiversity in the watershed. Kendall helped install more than 150 oyster castles to help fortify the shoreline. While learning about the interconnectivity of wetlands and larger forests, she was able to help protect the community she works and lives in.



- ◆ The Blackwater Work Area was invited to share their fire prevention message with the Suffolk Fire Department Youth Safety Camp. John Rose (forest technician) has worked closely with the Suffolk Fire Department over the years to bring Smokey Bear to this week long camp. This year John, Evan Richardson (area forester), Heather Tuck (regional fire specialist) and Kendall Topping shared the true Story of Smokey Bear with the campers. They also shared some of the equipment used to fight wildfires, as well as how the campers can spread Smokey's wildfire prevention message. At the end of the program, the students got to meet Smokey in person and see a Department of Forestry bulldozer!



- ◆ The Blackwater Work Unit consisting of Stephen Jasenak, Evan Richardson (area foresters), Kendall Topping, Meghan Mulroy-Goldman, John Rose (forest technician), and Scott Bachman (senior area forester) met at a closed sand pit in the City of Suffolk owned by one of VDOF landowner clients. Thanks to this landowner we were able to get newest VDOF staffers some seat time on the dozers operated on wildfires in a safe environment. The novice operators were teamed up with more experienced staff to learn the basics of tractor operation. Half of the day was spent on just becoming familiar with the controls of the newest units. After lunch, we had planned to get a little deeper into operations, but unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans. Significant dangerous thunderstorms rolled into the site ending the day prematurely. Hopefully, we will be able to get together again soon to hone our skills at this excellent training site before we move into the wildland environment. (pictured left to right, John, Stephen, Evan, Kendall and Meghan)



## Central Region

- ◆ Laura Guthrie (area forester) assisted the Southside Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) week-long 2021 Watershed Adventure Camp at Staunton River Battlefield State Park. Fifteen 4th and 5th graders attended, learning various forestry topics, including tree identification, tree aging and forest products.

- ◆ Chad Briggs and Darwin Rhodes (forest technicians), Zach Arnold (area forester), and Jeremy Lauck and Kevin Yost (part-time emergency firefighters) conducted two wildland fire training sessions for members of Frederick County Fire and Rescue.

- The sessions involved an in-class review and three practical stations. The fire department members rotated through each of the three stations, including pump and roll, progressive hose line construction, bulldozer operations and safety. In all, 30 fire and rescue members participated in the two training sessions lasting four hours each.



Training events like these help the VDOF build partnerships and capacity as it relates to our wildfire suppression program. A tremendous thank you goes out to Frederick County Fire and Rescue B-

Shift for inviting VDOF to conduct this training.



## News Clips

- ◆ [Wildfire smoke blowing across the U.S. is more toxic than we thought](#)
- ◆ [New \\$1.1 million Suffolk lumber facility creates 10 new jobs](#)
- ◆ [The Outside Story: Old-growth forests have much to offer](#)
- ◆ [10 Things You May Not Know About Wildfire Deployments](#)
- ◆ [New Markets for Wood Products Help Preserve Forests for Future Generations](#)
- ◆ [Fire and Smoke Map](#)